

Sunday, Jan 04, 2026

Give a warm welcome

America was once renowned as the land where people could come to breathe freely. The country was less settled then—but can feel quite crowded now, depending on where you're living. The planet's resources are scarcer and the natural environment more endangered. Still, Isaiah's prophecy and the gospel both remind us of the considerable gift that migrant people bring with them. Whether king or commoner, each person offers what they have to make the dynamic community that is the United States. Let's welcome the newcomer and remember that the infant Jesus was once a migrant, too.

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12 (20).

"Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you."

Monday, Jan 05, 2026

Surrender to God's will

At St. Alphonsus Church in downtown Baltimore you can visit the parish where Saint John Neumann served before he became a bishop. You can even step into his austere bedroom where a bed, tiny desk, kneeler, and picture of the Madonna make up his belongings. Simplicity was his obsession; becoming the bishop of Philadelphia certainly didn't fit into that plan. Yet he embraced his office and took on the task of serving the burgeoning immigrant church by learning 10 languages and doing what was best for the people he served and loved. When God speaks to you, try the gentle path of surrender.

MEMORIAL OF JOHN NEUMANN, BISHOP

1 John 3:22-4:6; Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25 (212). *"We receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him."*

Tuesday, Jan 06, 2026

Love begets love

A prayer to André Bessette, a brother of the Holy Cross order who spent a lifetime counseling and praying for people from his desk at the entrance to his community's residence in Montreal, says: "Grant us the grace to imitate his piety and charity so that, with him, we may share the reward promised to all those who care for their neighbor because of their love for you." Love comes from God, and we love others because we love God and find God's love in our love for others. Speaking of poor people, but in words that describe all Christian love, Catholic Worker cofounder Dorothy Day once said we start by loving the poor for Jesus but we soon love them for themselves and see each one to be special. Today, find God in others and others in God.

MEMORIAL OF ANDRÉ BESSETTE, RELIGIOUS

1 John 4:7-10; Mark 6:34-44 (213). *"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God."*

Wednesday, Jan 07, 2026

Soften your heart

How often have you walked down a street, looking down at the sidewalk or your phone, and not noticed a tree, or a sign, or even an entire building? When you finally notice it, you wonder how you could have missed it all this time. This phenomenon of not seeing what is right in front of us is not uncommon, nor is it limited to the physical realm. We are often blind to spiritual realities as well. When this happens, we know our hearts are "hardened." What

does it take to soften our hearts so that we can perceive the love that surrounds and permeates us every moment of every day? It begins with desire, which forms an intention, which evolves into practice, which turns into prayer, which relies on God. Consider this prayer from Sister Marianne Cope, O.S.F. for inspiration: "Let us make best use of the fleeting moments. They will not return."

1 John 4:11-18; Mark 6:45-52 (214). *"They had not understood the incident of the loaves. On the contrary, their hearts were hardened."*

Thursday, Jan 08, 2026

The ABCs of the human heart

Did Jesus know how to read? You may think that a strange question—various scripture passages say he did, and how could he not be able to do something that most schoolchildren in the United States today have learned by the age of 6 or 7? But for most of recorded history, being able to read and write was reserved to a small, elite segment of society. In the Roman Empire at the time Jesus lived, estimates say that only 3-10 percent of the population was literate. Judaism has always emphasized reading and study of the Torah, however, so it should not surprise us that Jesus likely could read—he certainly read the human heart with complete understanding. What does he find written on your heart?

1 John 4:19-5:4; Luke 4:14-22 (215). *"He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah."*

Friday, Jan 09, 2026

Some rules are meant to be broken

Why, when Jesus heals a leper, does he always tell the person not to say anything to anybody? Perhaps it is because the Lord broke a rule there. You see, according to the law of Moses, he wasn't supposed to touch the leper. But he did. Jesus broke a lot of rules. That's why he got into so much trouble. But Jesus was concerned with following God's laws, not humanity's, and such obedience, as Saint Philip Neri says, "is a shortcut to perfection." Jesus pointed out that the law was made for the sake of people, not the other way around. Mercy and compassion always manage to break a few rules.

1 John 5:5-13; Luke 5:12-16 (216). *"He ordered him not to tell anyone."*

Saturday, Jan 10, 2026

Do your groundwork

If you came to Earth from outer space, the sheer amount of teaching on chastity—the virtue of expressing sexuality appropriately—would convince you that it's the one non-negotiable item on your spiritual checklist. While chastity is essential, *humility* is the fundamental virtue upon which a holy life is based. Humility comes from the word *humus*, earth or ground. It reminds us that we're dust—or "not the Christ," as John the Baptist famously put it. As we decrease in centrality, God and others increase. Start from this "ground" and work your way up.

1 John 5:14-21; John 3:22-30 (217). *"John answered ... 'So this joy of mine has been made complete. He must increase; I must decrease.'"*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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